

I have long been concerned about the trend toward media consolidation as a threat to free speech. Sinclair Broadcasting is a classic example of why all of us should worry about too many stations in the hands of one organization. The decision by Sinclair to actually pre-empt programming in order to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election appalling. The abuse is flagrant and a matter of immediate concern to the FCC.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. When large companies control the airwaves, programming is determined more by the bottom line and less by what will promote democratic values. We need real news, real substance and we certainly need fairness. If Sinclair were balancing the anti-Kerry documentary with a pro-Kerry one, that would be something else. But clearly this move is not about advancing the debate but about using free air time to promote a specific political agenda. That is a clear violation of law.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.